



IFR NEWS SIVAN 5773

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סיוון

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AND PEACE IS EVERYWHERE

IFR member Rabbi Galit-Levy Slater

On my first visit to Israel in 1983, I travelled with a tour organized by the World Jewish Congress. The trip was 27 days, nearly an entire month. I flew from Los Angeles to New York on TWA, an airline that no longer exists.

I had pre-ordered Kosher meals for the entire trip, and TWA complied in an interesting way. My first meal started with a salad that consisted of greens, carrots, radishes and tomatoes mixed with ham, but I was given a packet of salad dressing that was marked "Kosher."

After that it was okay; I think I had roast chicken that was hermetically sealed and I don't recall what the dessert was.

I had to spend the night in a hotel room in New York, adjacent to JFK, and I didn't go into Manhattan.

The next morning I met my fellow tourists, all East Coasters except for me. We boarded our El Al plane and sat on it for what seemed like the entire day – and it probably was – while the El Al security searched every bag for possible explosive devices. We left in the evening.

The plane was filled to capacity with not only our tourists, but also what seemed like a thousand noisy teenagers, who spent nearly the entire 12-hour flight running up and down the aisles.

I had ordered an aisle seat, but when I boarded the plane, there was an elderly woman who refused to allow me to sit in my own seat, and the flight attendant was sympathetic to the other woman.

Because of the teenagers, who ignored the repeated requests to remain in their seats, sleeping was out of the question.

Our tour guide, Ari, introduced himself upon our arrival and the first thing he said was, "Welcome home."

I met my roommate, whose name has been forgotten over the years, a woman originally from New York, of course, but who was now living in Florida, of course.

We bussed to Tel Aviv, where we were told that walking anywhere in the city was completely safe, but to beware of people parking on the sidewalks. That was because the fine for parking on the sidewalk was much less than double parking or parking in the wrong place, but on the street itself.

My roommate and I both decided to sleep as long as possible, after the tiring flight, and when I woke up a few hours later, she was sitting on the side of the bed staring out the window at the sun setting over the Mediterranean.

I suddenly realized that she was seeing something she had never seen before. I have lived in California all my life and seeing the sun set over the ocean was a lovely, but familiar sight. My roommate was accustomed to seeing the sunrise over the ocean, not set. She was awed by it.

That evening I took the tour guides advice and went for a walk – by myself. I have an excellent sense of direction, always have. So I didn't get lost. I wandered into an area that wasn't all lit by the big hotel lights, and after several minutes, a young man approached me and asked if I was an American. I told him I was, and he said, "I think you should know that you are walking through the heart of the 'red light' district; and perhaps you should return to your hotel."

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IFR Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.



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I won't go into what the rest of the trip was like except that the last place we visited was Jerusalem.

Our bus driver followed the route that the Israeli soldiers took in 1967, we saw the abandoned military vehicles and tanks leading up to the top of the mountain. We stopped and Ari gave us instructions on how different this city is from the rest of the places we had visited. We were told not to wear shorts, and to keep our shoulders and arms covered, especially when we were in the more religious areas.

It was hot, around 95-100 during the day, but the nights were cool, very much like here in Southern California. If we wore short sleeve T-shirts, we should carry a sweater or a shawl to cover our arms in some places.

Ari then broke out some wine and we made a brachah before we entered the City of Peace.

My memories of my time in Jerusalem are vivid, although they are 30-years old.

I caught the flu my first night, laryngitis and all – and I was scheduled to sing at the Kahn Club, a nightclub in a cave. I was going to sing with their band; I wasn't sure what I was going to do, and I followed a woman singer who was very popular at that time, and when I got there, she sang one of the songs that I was thinking of doing.

I wound up singing 2 songs, "Nevertheless" was the first one, and because the woman who sang ahead of me had not sung it, I sang "Jerusalem of Gold."

My voice wasn't great, but my fellow tourists and the rest of the Israelis in the club cheered when I finished and it felt incredible.

As we left and started to get on the bus, Ari stopped me and said, "I can't believe you sang "Jerusalem of Gold."

Anyone who has been to Israel – and especially to Jerusalem – knows how very different the city is, how special the feeling is being there.

Even though there is turmoil and acrimony and frustration at not finding a solution to the problems she faces, Israel still maintains its strengths, its incredible progress in science and Jerusalem – Jerusalem still has that undeniable, almost overwhelming feeling that here, within these ancient walls and ancient streets and stones – peace can still be found if we look hard enough for it.



Yom Ha'Zikaron la'Shoah ve-la'G'vurah

יום הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

IFR member Rabbi David Degani

This month we commemorated 70 years to the Warsaw Ghetto revolt which started on April 19th 1943 and ended 3 weeks later. Of course, since we go by the Jewish calendar we remembered this event on the 27th day of the month of Nisan.

This day is of course is also dedicated to the remembrance of the Holocaust or in Hebrew, "Yom Ha-Zikaron La-Shoa Ve La-Gevura (a memorial day for the Shoa and Heroism). This correlation is not by accident. It is extremely significant.

I don't know what "Yom Hashoa" is . I heard this strange term here in the United States. It translates as " A day of the Holocaust"!

Really?

Are we repeating the holocaust once every year? No one in Israel uses that term.

"So, what's the big deal? isn't it but a simple inaccuracy? Actually, there is a big, big difference . A difference which cut to the core of our American Jewish state of mind.

The statistical and other details of the atrocities during the Shoa which we recite on "Yom Hashoa" seems to fit our Diasporatic state of mind just fine.

Under the banner of remembering all the atrocities we recall the suffering as we absolutely should. Suffering is in our blood. Every Jewish history buff could easily narrate atrocities in every century for the last 20 of them. I am sure you know, in many centuries there were plethora of "examples". Indeed we should remember all of them as well as their culmination in the 20th century Holocaust.

This is indeed important since many Jews are not aware of the unspeakable atrocities perpetrated so casually against us Jews, over the many centuries. In terms of percentage of Jewish souls lost, The Cholmnitsky pogroms, as an example, were as bad as the Holocaust.

The correct name implies Shoa and Heroism. One without the other equals none. Two sides of the same coin. We cannot dwell on one side of the coin- the atrocities and ignore the other part, the heroism. Certainly, it is extremely important to remember for-ever the atrocities and the devastating statistical information which illustrates the magnitude of the catastrophe.

However, not mentioning or minimizing the heroism part of this special day renders injustice and is in fact the desecration of the heroes of those horrific years. We should put them on the pedestal of the Holocaust commemoration.

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Yom Ha'Zikaron la'Shoah ve-la'G'vurah

יום הזיכרון לשואה ולגבורה

We should honor the holy memories of the hundreds of thousands of the resistance fighters who fought amazing desperate battles against their monstrous enemy in the Ghettos and, to some extent, in some concentration camps.

Did I say "Holy memories of hundred of thousands fighters"? Yes I did.

This is not only about the better known Warsaw Ghetto uprising -an amazing event in and by itself. It's about the dozens of Ghetto heroes all over Europe who revolted with practically nothing in their hands. We all know about the thousands of Jewish partisans all over Europe. We should remember each and every single survivor since each one of them is a war hero.

Heroic resistance has many faces. The physical fight against the Nazis was only a part of the Jewish resistance picture. Every child who smuggled food into the Ghetto, every man and woman who uttered prayers or Kaddish for the death all around them, every teacher who taught Hebrew under the most horrific conditions, every Jew who maintain some kind of dignity and order (and they all did) was a resistance hero. Memorial day for the Holocaust and Heroism is about that. Ignoring it is all about calling the day "Yom Hashoa".

I feel I have some spiritual connection to Mordechai Anilevitch the 23 years old commander of the Warsaw revolt. What an amazing young man! who eventually dies a hero's death three weeks after the beginning of the revolt on May 7 1943. I was born 10 years to the date after that. How many of our fellow Jews know that this year we mark the 70 years anniversary of the revolt?

How many know about the uprising in the Ghettos of Lodz or the one in Treblinka ,(October 14, 1943), In Sobibor, (October 7 1944) or the one in Auschwitz-Birkenau? How many of us know about the uprisings which took place in Kruszyzna (1942), Minsk-Mazowiecki (1943), Jawakaka (1943) and of course in the ghettos of Vilna, and the Gehttos of Mir, Lachva, Kremenets, Czestochowa, Nesvizh, Sosnowiec, and Tarnow, In Bialystok (1943) ?

Aren't all of them "Giborim Almonim", Unknown, unsung true Jewish Heroes?

And then there are another two of my personal heroes whom I love and admire beyond words:

Chana Senesh and Chaviva Reik the Hagana paratroopers sent on a mission to Nazi Europe never to come back. Do we ever make their story a part of the day? . Do we even mention it?

And if we don't know these names and events, do we really and truly remember the Holocaust?

It is my opinion that millions of yellow candles and yellow Magen David on our clothes will never do justice to the victims of the holocaust unless we begin to understand what really happened beyond the horrific statistics.

On March 27 1937 we American Jews got really angry. We had a gigantic rally at Madison Square Garden . That's right. Hitler is bathing his country in anti Semitic orgy and we rallied in NY. Everyone was very polite. Fiery speeches were delivered. Everyone listened intensely and then went home.

Don't get me wrong. This is not a cast of judgment. I was not born yet when all this was happening and I understand that Jews dealt with a great Anti-Semitism here in the States and hesitated to make too much "Noise".

Yet, I cant help but wonder about our reaction to our tragedies during so many centuries and about us , American Jews today. Have we learned our lesson? We are mentioning the atrocities of the holocaust and are relegating the resistance and heroism to a side story, to a by-the-way status. Is this some kind of victim consciousness which overshadows our behavior? Are we forgetting who we really are: Proud, indestructible and -when oppressed- spiritually galvanized? We have always rushed to raise our voices and become intensely active on behalf of injustice and oppression of others- As we should. But when it comes to our own we keep a strange silence.

The reality is that Jewish welfare in some European states today is not much different from what it was in the early 1930's. Jews are running away from France and Belgium in droves , Denmark is practically Judenrein (clean of Jews). In many other European countries it is not safe to walk in the streets with a Kipah on and, in fact, Jews are beaten up. The reality is that in some media outlets here in the USA, anti Jewish sentiment, cloaked as anti Israel, is prevalent. In many campuses around the nation professors are molding the next generation's minds and hearts into Israel hatred using lies, deceptions and gross misrepresentations.

Here in Ft. Lauderdale demonstrators demanded that Jews go back to Auschwitz to be gassed. Most of the local news stations picked up on it.

We in south Florida all heard it and did nothing. Jews and Israel are being demonized and we, myself included, don't even rally in a polite and quiet demonstration.

Alas, I have no one else to blame but myself for my inactivity in the face of injustice against us Jews.

Russian or French, Sephardi or Ashkenazi, it's not Shavuot without Blintzes!

IFR member Rabbi Barbara Aiello

For most of us Jews, we track our holiday memories by what we eat. Whether it's honey cake at Rosh Ha-Shanah, Break-the-Fast bagels and lox, Chanukah latkes or Hamentaschen at Purim, our memories are wrapped around the holiday goodies we tasted at the family table.



But author Judith Segal reminds us that although dairy dishes are not a part of the holiday halakah, for most of us it wouldn't be Shavuot without a blintze.

So how did this international treat become the staple of the Shavuot table? Joe Pastry (www.joepastry.com) explored blintz history and discovered that the filled pancake was born centuries ago somewhere in Central Europe, possibly Poland, Russia or Hungary but the treat became popular around 1800. "That's when blintzes first began to appear on the European culinary map," says Joe, who reports that the name, "blintze" is Yiddish in origin, however in Russian they're blini and in Hungary they're palascinta, and in France they're crepes.

In her article on blintz history author Judith Segal discusses the varying theories on the origin of the dairy menu for Shavuot, among them, the idea that the Torah that was given to us on Shavuot is sweet as milk and honey. For this reason most blintzes are filled with fruit or sweet cheese.

Segal goes on to say that "an internet story claims that the Spanish King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, spared their Jewish blintz chef from the Inquisition," but historical timing begs to differ, especially since the Jews had not yet dispersed into Eastern Europe. But then again, who knows?

Segal's most important historical blintze account is a true one. She writes, "Another report tells of a young Russian Jew recruited into Stalin's secret police. When someone attempted to poison Stalin's food, Stalin had all six of his chefs executed, and appointed this Jewish boy as his replacement chef. The boy knew only two recipes, for latkes and for blintzes, and he claims that Stalin became very fond of those blintzes.

He later escaped from Russia, and subsequently told his story. (See: www.jpost.com/com/Archive/27.Jul.1998/Features/Article-20.html)

So, nu, when it comes to your Shavuot dairy dinner, add blintzes to your menu and you'll sit, you'll eat, we'll talk. Chag Shavuot Sameach and Enjoy!

Why do we eat Dairy? One of the most popular customs on Shavuot is to eat dairy foods such as cheesecake, cheese, blintzes and ice cream. If you have ever wondered where this tradition comes from, here are a few possible explanations:



Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah, included in the Torah are the laws of kashrut. Before the Torah was given the concept of kashrut did not exist. Hence, one explanation for the eating of dairy on

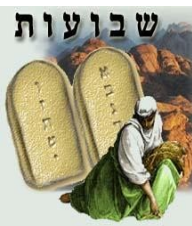
Shavuot is that when the Jews received the Torah they did not have the tools they would need to prepare kosher meat.

As a result their first meal after receiving the Torah was a dairy meal. (*Mishnah Berurah 494:12; Talmud - Bechorot 6b.*)

Another possible explanation has to do with Shir HaShirim (the Song of Songs). Verse 4:11 says "milk and honey are under your tongue" and some have said that the Torah is like the milk in this verse. Like milk, the Torah sustains us. Hence, a dairy meal on Shavuot celebrates the nourishing quality of the Torah.

The Revelation at Sinai occurs directly after the Exodus from slavery in Egypt. This journey is described as one "from the misery of Egypt to a country flowing with milk and honey..." (Exodus 3:8-17).

Thus, eating dairy on Shavuot commemorates the sweetness of freedom and the new life that lay before the Jewish people.



**Rabbi Frank Tamburello's
column featuring Jewish
Holiday Eats and Treats
And for your Shavuot dinner:**

PASTA BECHAMEL

Prep Time: 20 minutes Cook Time: 25 minutes
Total Time: 45 minutes



Ingredients:

2 pounds (1 kilo)
pasta - baby shells
or penne are best,
medium shells or ridged pasta is also okay

1/2 cup butter
1 small onion, finely diced
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups cream (15-30%)
1 1/2 cups milk
salt and pepper to taste
1/4 teaspoon ground all-spice (optional)
1 cup finely grated Cheddar

Preparation:

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
2. Preheat oven to 325° F (160° C).
3. In a saute pan, melt butter. Lightly sweat the onions and whisk in the flour. Cook to a blonde roux.
4. Add cream. Cook until it reaches a simmer, whisking constantly.
5. Add milk. Bring to a light steam (just under simmering).
6. Add spices. Give it a few more whisks and turn off the flame.
7. Strain the sauce to get rid of the onion. Then mix the sauce with the pasta.
8. Place mixture in a 12 x 2 1/2 inch pan, or any pan into which it will fit without making it too thick.
9. Sprinkle Cheddar cheese on top. Bake for 25 minutes.



PIEROGI CASSEROLE

Ingredients: Servings: 4



1 (16 ounce) package potato & cheese
pierogies (about 12 pierogies)
1 tablespoon margarine
1 medium onion, diced
1 green pepper, diced
1 (10 ounce) can cream of mushroom soup
(or any Cream soup)
1/4 cup milk
1/4 cup cheddar cheese, shredded

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°

Boil Pierogies for about 5-8 minutes. Drain.
In a small skillet, melt margarine.

Saute onion and green pepper for about 5
minutes.

In a 2 quart casserole, combine drained
pierogies with onion and green peppers.

Blend milk and soup and pour over casse-
role.

Top with Cheese.

Bake in 350° oven for 35 minutes.

B'Teyavon!





IFR Rabbis News & Shmooze



New IFR members since Kislev 5773

Rabbi Ivan Browner

Rabbi Chana Karmann-Lente

Rabbi Barry Altmark

Rabbi Galit Levy-Slater

Rabbi Ronda Wanderman Young

Rabbi Eric D. Morgenstern

Rabbi Harvey Rosenstock, M.D.

Rabbi Deborah Reichmann

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Rabbi Lewis Solomon

IFR News Editors

Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Rabbi Frank Tamburello

Design/Layout: shosh

PSALM 89 - SHAVUOT

Upon Sinai, in darkness and in light,
Upon Sinai, the hand of Moses trembles;
Below Sinai the people sing,
A cacophony of song dances in the air.

Upon Sinai, with shadow and with fire,
With coldness and with fierce heat,
The mouth of Moses trembles
As he reads back the dictation.

Upon Sinai, in the still air,
Moses nods once more and struggles to rise
As he has struggled these past months
To feel his legs beneath him on the sand.

The songs of the people dance in the air
Shimmering melodies of delight
Hover in the desert heat
As Moses guards his steps down the mountain.

- by Debbie Perlman

Submitted by:
IFR member Rabbi Frank Tamburello
Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism



Rifuah Shelema to:
Rabbi Marvin Pearlman
Rabbi Dr Raphael Pazo

IFR rabbis enjoy Conference in Delray Beach, Florida March 5-7 2013



B"H

In honor of Shavuot nearing I want to share this story about the value of studying Torah.

IFR member Rabbi Bruce (Dov) Forman, Maggid

WITH ONLY A SINGLE PAGE

Once, while traveling abroad, a young man became reacquainted with his heritage and decided to become an observant Jew. He studied Torah, fulfilled mitzvot, and even when he returned to his parents' home he continued on his spiritual path.

His elder father was very assimilated and had no idea what it was all about. He was already retired and had little to fill his time. Watching his son poring over his Talmud, the father was impressed. His son's life seemed to be so rich with meaning. Finally, one day he approached his son and asked to teach him a page.

"This will be very hard for you," the son replied. "In order to understand Talmud, you first need to know Hebrew, and you don't even know the aleph-beit. And there's a second language involved: Aramaic."

But his father was determined. In spite of everything, he insisted his son to teach him at least one page of Talmud. They began but the visit was a short one and their learning could only continue during infrequent subsequent visits. It took a full year of learning to finish one page.

When they were done, the father cried jubilantly, "I want to make a party. I've finished learning a whole page of Talmud!"

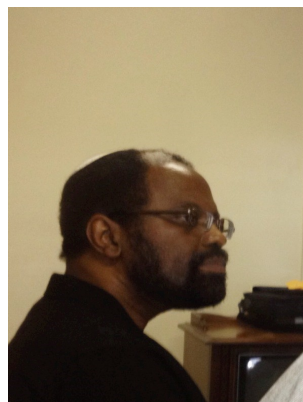
"There is a custom of making a party for the completion of an entire tractate of the Talmud, called a siyum," the son admitted, "but not for a single page." But the father was insistent.

At a loss, the son went to his rebbe to ask if such a thing -- a siyum on one page of Talmud -- was acceptable.

"Make a siyum," the rebbe instructed. Then he added, "Let me know when it will be. I wish to take part in this joyous occasion!"

And so it was that a siyum was made on a single page of Talmud learned by a man with his son over the course of a full year. The rebbe attended the siyum, lavishing praise on the old man who refused to let any difficulty get in the way of achieving his goal. The next morning, the old man did not wake up from his sleep. He had died in the night -- the type of death they call "the kiss of G-d."

The rebbe came to the funeral and delivered a eulogy. In it he declared, "The Talmud records that there are those who purchase their World-to-come in a single hour. Now we see it is possible to do so with a single page."



IFR member Rabbi Steve Blane...

Germany, Australia, South Korea, Kuwait, England, Canada, Portugal and Mexico- what do all of these places have in common? People from each of these countries are regular participants at Sim Shalom's Online Synagogue Services. Everyone is welcome and no one is judged—Sim Shalom reaches out to those people who don't feel a connection to traditional congregations including interfaith couples and the unaffiliated. Sim Shalom combines modernization with just the right amount of tradition- and they broadcast their online services around the world.

Sim Shalom meets the needs of people unable to attend traditional services as well as those who are simply not connected to the local Jewish community. Sim Shalom participants have wonderful things to say about their experience with Sim Shalom.

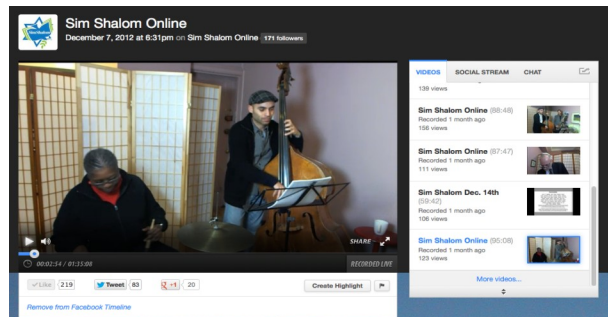
"We get little Judaism here in Daegu, S. Korea," said Elia. "It is rare to have a Rabbi visit us, so as often as we can, we watch your services. It brings a little piece of home to us here in a far off place."

"Thank You SO Much For What You are Doing! I live on the Southside of Atlanta and the nearest Synagogue is almost an hour away & sometimes with two hours of traffic, it defeats the purpose of Services because I am so tired upon arrival that I can't even read the Siddur," Says Don.

After years of his concept of an online Jewish community being labeled as "too untraditional" and "too visionary," Rabbi Steve Blane finally found his niche. Combining his passions- his love for music and joyful worship and his goal of nurturing a congregation of individuals who are non-judgmental and open-minded, At a time when Jewish traditions and rituals sadly seem to be waning, Rabbi Blane hopes to reach out and to teach and build a worldwide kehila kedosha (a holy online community).

Sim Shalom offers unique and exciting services that people of all ages find accessible and joyful. All services are live at 7PM EST.

Sim Shalom community now offers weeknight Ma'ariv services and online Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat services for the entire world.



Sim Shalom is a non-profit 501(C)(3) tax exempt organization. Sim Shalom's mission is to nurture a Jewish connection through innovative services, creative education and dynamic outreach to the local and global community. They accomplish this through offering weekly online interactive services. Their services are participatory and accessible for everyone.

One Rabbi's Journey towards

לא ישא גוי אל גוי תרב - לא ילמדו עוד מלחמה

GAMES

Sports Illustrated

The Rabbi of Roundball

Reeve Brenner has developed a game that allows the able-bodied and the disabled to compete on a basis of equality | by ED MILLER

REEVE ROBERT BRENNER IS NOT YOUR average rabbi. Your average rabbi's signature is not on his own line of basketballs, as Brenner's is. And even if it were, your average rabbi probably couldn't keep one of those balls spinning on his fingertip, as Brenner can. But let's say, for argument's sake, that your average rabbi *can* spin the ball. He surely would never do such a thing in front of the congregation. Brenner did. About a decade ago Brenner, performing at the pulpit of Temple Emanuel in Cherry Hill, N.J., spun a basketball before a couple hundred rather amazed temple goers. No, he's not your average rabbi.

Basketball has always been a big part of the 55-year-old Brenner's life. It was the favorite game of his youth in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn, and he has continued to play as an adult—from pickup games in Bethesda, Md., where he now lives, to New York City to Tel Aviv. To hear Brenner tell it, he isn't your average basketball player, either. "If you add up all the points I've scored, rebounds I've taken, fouls I've committed, shots and steals," he says, "I don't know anybody who could put up those kinds of numbers, unless they've played three times a week for 30 years like I have."

Having outdone—at least in his own mind—Abdul-Jabbar, Chamberlain and Russell, Brenner has recently taken after another basketball legend: James Naismith. Brenner, too, has founded a basketball game. It's called Bankshot. It's a radically modified version of the sport, and it allows wheelchair and able-bodied athletes to compete against one another without giving special allowances to either group.

Inspired by his young cousin, Janice Herman, who was confined to a wheelchair after an automobile accident, Brenner came up with Bankshot while living in Israel in 1981. He wanted to develop a "nonexclusionary" basketball contest that



Brenner is ever the enthusiast, whether preaching the virtues of clean living or of basketball.

like hoop saplings sprung from radioactive soil.

As with some modern art, Bankshot takes getting used to. The format is similar to that of miniature golf, with 18 stations plus a tiebreaker hoop, all set up in an area about half the size of a tennis court. The stations have uniquely shaped backboards that require different types of shots. At each hoop the shooter lets fly from three different circles on the ground. A complete circuit usually takes about 45 minutes.

The shots start off easily enough, with a straight-ahead bank shot off a conventional backboard at the first station. Varying points, determined by distance and difficulty, are scored for each shot that goes in, and bonus points are gained by hitting from all three circles at any given station. In the middle rounds the backboards get trickier, calling for wraparound shots and double-backboard ricochet shots. The game becomes increasingly difficult, culminating in the final two "very diabolical" stations, where points are doubled to a maximum of 20 per station. "Get your points early" is Brenner's advice. At the tiebreaker station, which Brenner calls the Black Hole, a player must bank the ball off two rimless backboards and into a basket a few feet away; it's enough to make Michael Jordan cringe. "You need a good touch, brains and a feel for physics," Brenner says.

A perfect score is 200 points. Brenner, the sport's Wilt as well as its Naismith, is the only player known to have reached

entire families, including those with disabled members, could play. He decided not to alter the configuration of either the ball or the rim, so he began fooling with the backboard. He experimented with cardboard models, bending them to create challenging shooting angles. Then he hired a fabric manufacturer to make fiberglass versions of the most interesting backboards. He lowered the rim to eight feet from the floor, to better accommodate wheelchair athletes. And he ruled out all running and jumping.

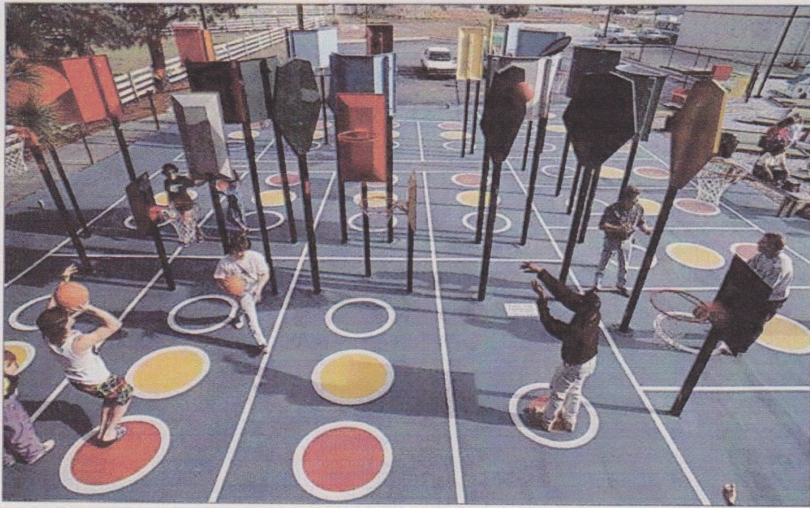
The result is a game that is a mix of basketball, billiards, miniature golf and even fine art. Bankshot backboards have been displayed in New York City's Museum of Modern Art and in the Israel National Art Museum in Jerusalem. This is only fitting, inasmuch as Brenner cites modern art giants Picasso, Kandinsky and Moreau as influences on his designs. With their odd shapes and bright colors, Brenner's backboards have a surreal, futuristic look,

G A M E S

that plateau, but he is now semiretired. "The inventor has got to make room for the players," he explains.

Bankshot is being played at miniature golf courses and parks in 65 cities across the United States and in Israel. The sport's first national champion, 16-year-old Mike Anderson of Monticello, Ind., won his crown last September by scoring 185 points. His best score ever is 188, and he's aiming to become the second Bankshotter to reach 200. "Our court has been open for about three years," says Mike,

ning sports, and there are not a sufficient number of sports where different levels can play together." Not yet. If Brenner has his way, there will be. In addition to Bankshot, he has thought up 23 other "total mix" games. A total-mix sport stresses dexterity and coordination over strength, speed and jumping ability. For instance, Target Ball incorporates a soft ball, a bunch of deflectors and several targets set up around a course. There's no *citius, altius, fortius* about it—you simply hit the targets with the ball.



A Bankshot court looks like basketball's enchanted forest, as perceived by Picasso.

who practices Bankshot at a local amusement center in his hometown. "It's outdoors and only open in the summer, so I have to get out right after Memorial Day each year to get my touch back."

While Mike is able-bodied, Brenner and others believe a disabled athlete will win the nationals in a future year. "The wheelchair athlete can sit right on each circle, just as someone who can stand up would," says Roy Ovesen, who with his wife, Jan, owns a Bankshot court in Centerville, Ga. The Ovesens' court, adjacent to their minigolf layout, is frequented by several disabled athletes who wheel up and pay \$2.50 to challenge, and often beat, their able-bodied friends. "There's no reason at all they can't compete, as long as they can shoot."

Brenner sees Bankshot as a "turn in the world of sports. The world is full of run-

Total-mix games have their roots in Brenner's spiritual creed, which he terms "polydix," from *poly*, meaning many, and *dix*, for doctrine. "Mine isn't a view that says there's one way of doing something," he says. "My feeling is that different expressions of theology or theory have validity." Brenner's polydixical ideas are espoused not just through sports, but from the pulpit at the Bethesda Jewish Congregation, one of the more liberal in the Washington, D.C., area.

Brenner's life has long been a polysided pursuit, a total mix. The son of a monument maker, he grew up competing in all sports and was a good athlete. He played basketball at Brooklyn's Yeshiva University High School, which was located a few blocks from Ebbets Field. The school's gymnasium had a low ceiling, and this feature obviously influenced the future inventor of Bankshot. "Reeve learned how to put shots off the ceiling," says Zalman Schrader, a West Orange, N.J., physician

who grew up with Brenner. "That could be where he got the idea for his game."

Brenner played hoops at Brooklyn College and on a team from CCNY's Baruch School of Business Administration. He did graduate work in social psychology at CCNY and then studied to become a rabbi at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institution of Religion in Manhattan.

Between 1964 and '66, Brenner was an Army chaplain in West Germany. He taught Jewish religious thought and philosophy at St. Vincent College and Seminary in Latrobe, Pa., for two years; lived in Israel; and served at other congregations up and down the East Coast, finally landing in Maryland in 1986.

He still plays an occasional game of *real* basketball, usually at the Jewish Community Center in Rockville, Md. "He's ultra-tenacious," says Wayne Pines, a Washington public relations executive and congregation member who often plays with Brenner. "And without a question, he's the best shooter on the court."

Brenner works out of a Bethesda office that doubles as Bankshot's national headquarters and as his counseling center. On one wall is a caricature of Brenner dunking a basketball and shouting, "Polydix. . . Total mix. . . Bankshot. . . Blah, blah, blah." Brenner loves it.

The Bankshot operation involves a staff of five who market setups for \$20,000—plus shipping, installation and other costs, which can add another \$20,000 once landscaping is done. Most Bankshot buyers are minigolf-course owners or municipal park departments.

Brenner is, as you might expect, always dreaming up new things in that cramped office. His latest grand scheme is to open a "folk sports" theme park, a family-oriented site that would feature all of his total-mix games. "It's the next step beyond Disney," he says. Those who know Brenner don't doubt that the park will rise one day. "His approach is very powerful at times," says Ovesen. "He has a very sincere belief in what he's doing."

"People often think of rabbis as stern and humorless," says Brenner. "When they meet me, they're surprised. I'm the kind of person who breaks down stereotypes." And walls. ■

Ed Miller lives in Norfolk, Va., and is a staff writer for *The Virginian-Pilot*.

If you know of a camp, JCC or municipal or city recreation center interested in inclusion that could benefit using BankShot, mention to Rabbi Brenner that you are an IFR MEMBER and you could receive a \$250.00 referral fee. LOGON to: <http://www.bankshot.com/> [Contact Rabbi Reeve Brenner](#)